

- What is an antonym for _____?
- Which word means the opposite of _____?
- The word _____ in this story means about the same as ...
- What does the word _____ in the (_____) paragraph mean?
- Have students match parts of speech—nouns to nouns, verbs to verbs.
- Teach words like *synonym*, *antonym*, *opposite*, and *similar*, so kids will be prepared when they meet them on the test.
- Sometimes the definition of a word appears right in the sentence along with the test word. Teach kids to look and see if the definition is nearby.
- Teach suffixes and prefixes, and teach kids to look at the parts of the word. For example, if the word *reignite* comes up and kids know that *re* means to do something again and they know that *ignite* means to light, they can deduce that *reignite* means to relight.
- Remind them to eliminate definitions that they know do not fit the meaning of the unfamiliar word and choose the closest match.

Literal Questions

Questions Whose Answers May Be Found in the Text

- What ...
- When ...
- Which ...
- Where ...
- How ...
- Questions about sequence: for example, Which of these events happened first?
- Items that ask for objective information from the passage: for example, Glaciers form when ...

Teaching Suggestions

- Teach kids to skim and scan the text, matching the words of the question to specific words in the text.
- Have them find the section of text that refers specifically to the words in the question and scan that part.
- Teach them to overview several paragraphs to notice events or steps in a sequence.
- Teach kids to visualize the passage in their mind. Their mental images can help the reader remember details that may answer literal questions in the piece.
- Remind kids to eliminate answers they know to be untrue.

Summarizing and Synthesizing Questions

Questions That Require Identifying Important Ideas and Pulling Information Together

- Which statement best summarizes ...
- What is the main idea?
- What is the main reason ...
- What is the most important idea in this article?
- What is the article/story mostly about?
- What is the article/story mainly about?
- This article (section) mainly describes ...
- The story/article was written mainly in order to ...
- What is another title for this story/article?
- What is another good name for this story/article?

Teaching Suggestions

- Teach kids to use the determining importance strategy to think about a big idea or theme that is central to the story or article. (See Chapter 10.)
- Remind kids that the “mostly about, mainly about” questions require them to read for the gist.
- Teach kids that when they are asked to identify the main idea, they need to ask themselves what the passage is mostly about. They should look through the passage to see how many times a word is repeated as a clue to what it is mostly about.
- Explain that distractor answers often answer questions that are the most interesting to kids but not the most important to the test writer. Remind them that when they are taking a test, the author's big idea is what is most important whether it matters to the reader or not. Have them carefully consider distractor answers and eliminate any that don't relate to the big idea. (See the lesson in Chapter 10, “Important to Whom?”)

- Teach kids to screen out their own personal opinions and stick to the information in the passage.
- Teach kids that the most important information is often revealed in the first or last paragraph of the passage and that the most important information in a paragraph is often revealed in the first or last sentence of the paragraph.
- Kaplan suggests that the wrong answers are often actual facts or details from the passage. They can be appealing options, so kids need to know the difference between a main idea and a supporting detail. "Remind kids that just because a piece of information appears in the passage doesn't make it the main idea" (Johnson and Johnson 2000). Kids who have practiced sorting and sifting details from big ideas as discussed in the Determining Importance chapter should be able to eliminate ancillary information.
- As always, encourage them to use the process of elimination.

Inferential Questions

Questions That Require Deduction or Drawing Conclusions from Text Information

- Why ...
- What can you conclude ...
- What can you generalize ...
- What lesson does this teach?
- What is the problem?
- What lesson did the characters learn?
- Which of these is most likely true about ...
- From this story/article you can probably guess ...
- What is probably true ...
- How does the author feel about ...
- Which of these is also an appropriate title for ...
- After reading this, what will probably happen next?
- Questions about characters actions, motives, feelings.

Teaching Suggestions

- Inferential questions require readers to come up with answers that are not explicitly found in the text. Teach kids to merge their thinking with text clues to infer an answer. (See Chapter 9, "Visualizing and Inferring," for more lessons on how to teach kids to infer.)
- Have them search for evidence in the text to support an answer they think might be correct and underline the clues, assuming they can write on the test.
- Teach them to use information in the text to support inferences about the characters, their feelings, their behaviors, and so forth, but don't overly rely on background knowledge.
- Teach kids to merge their thinking with clues in the text to determine the author's message or purpose in writing the piece.

For further information, we suggest you pick up a copy of *A Teacher's Guide to Standardized Reading Tests: Knowledge Is Power*, by Lucy Calkins, Kate Montgomery, Beverly Falk, and Donna Santman (1998), which describes a thoughtful approach to test reading. And to keep ourselves abreast of what is going on in the testing world, we frequently go online to www.fairtest.org, the website of The National Center for Fair & Open Testing (FairTest), whose mission is to advance "quality education and equal opportunity by promoting fair, open, valid, and educationally beneficial evaluations of students, teachers, and schools." They publish and share thought-provoking articles in the monthly *FairTest Examiner*, a free online email newsletter. Check it out.